

his core, but also one of the most compassionate individuals you could imagine.

To lose Harry Reid is like losing track of the North Star. There are many in this Chamber who got to where they are because of him.

Next Wednesday, January 12, Harry will make his final return to the U.S. Capitol, where he will lie in state under the Rotunda. As we honor his life and legacy, I will have more to say in the coming days. But for now, I can only say that Harry was my leader, my mentor, and one of my dearest friends.

When you lose someone who is as close to us as Harry was, they are never truly gone. They will always stay with us. As we gavel in today, I take comfort knowing that Harry is with us in spirit, walking alongside us as we continue the work he dedicated himself to for so many years.

To Harry's family, to his wife Landra, to all the children and grandchildren, I offer my prayers and my condolences.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Now, Mr. President, the Senate gavels in on this icy January morning to mark the beginning of a new year, and there is much we must accomplish. At the start of 2020, few could have foreseen the awful trials our country has endured over the past 2 years.

But, against adversity, the American people responded. Last year, over 200 million Americans got vaccinated against COVID, 6 million jobs were added back to the economy, and Congress delivered on historic legislation that gave Americans a much needed lifeline to get through the worst of COVID.

In a 50-50 Senate, we passed the first stand-alone infrastructure bill in decades, passed historic funding for the sciences and tech innovation, and confirmed the most judicial nominees in a President's first year since Ronald Reagan.

Despite the immense challenges before us, we now begin 2022 better off compared to where we were 1 year ago. But, of course, there is much, much still left to do. So let us continue.

To begin this week, the Senate will vote to confirm Gabriel Sanchez as U.S. circuit court judge for the Ninth Circuit. A graduate of Yale, a Fulbright scholar, and a current associate justice of the California Court of Appeals, Justice Sanchez has presided in hundreds of cases and has the experience and expertise necessary to be an excellent addition to the Federal bench.

Off the floor, the negotiations will continue with Members of our caucus and with the White House on finding a path forward on Build Back Better. As I mentioned before Christmas, I intend to hold a vote in the Senate on BBB, and we will keep voting until we get a bill passed. The stakes are high for us to find common ground on this legislation. The climate crisis continues to worsen. Families and children continue

dealing with the impacts of COVID, and too many Americans still struggle to pay the high cost of healthcare and prescription drugs. We will keep working until we get something done.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. President, now, about January 6 and defending democracy, at the same time the Senate will also proceed on another urgent and fundamental matter: protecting our democracy and strengthening the right to vote in free and fair elections.

Later today, I will meet with a number of my colleagues to continue our conversation on voting rights, and I will meet with our entire caucus for the first time this year to talk about how we are going to move forward. There has been constant discussion among Members over the break—constant. I must have made a minimum of 10 phone calls every day, with maybe the exception of Christmas, in respect for my colleagues. But we have to keep moving forward.

And, a few days from now, our country will observe a dark and troubling milestone: the 1-year anniversary of January 6, the day that thousands of rioters, urged on by the vicious lies of the disgraced former President, waged a violent assault upon the U.S. Capitol in order to prevent a peaceful transfer of power.

This was no just peaceful demonstration; this was aimed at undoing our democracy. Thank God they failed.

As I said hours after the attack, January 6, 2021, will be forever remembered as a day of enduring infamy, a permanent blemish in the story of American democracy, and the final, bitter act of the worst President—the worst President—in modern times.

Of course, over the course of this week, we will pay tribute to the heroes who stepped up that fateful day: our Capitol Police, the DC Metro Police, our National Guard who kept watch for months, and everyone who acted quickly that day to save the lives and save our democracy. But this week—this week—we must also acknowledge that the attack on January 6 was not a one-off. It did not materialize out of the blue. On the contrary, January 6 was a symptom of a much broader illness that has now infected the modern Republican Party: an effort to delegitimize our elections, rooted in Donald Trump's Big Lie.

While January 6 was only 1 day, the Big Lie lives on and has only grown stronger. The Big Lie lives on in Republican-dominated State legislatures, where at least 19 States have passed 33 new laws that will potentially make it harder—harder—for millions to vote in our elections. They say they want to prevent fraud, and they have no evidence of fraud. We all know what they are up to: vitiating, poisoning our elections, this sacred part of American democracy.

And the violence and threats of violence continue. The Big Lie lives on through the troubling wave of violent

threats that election workers across the country have endured over the course of the last year, all simply for the audacity of having done their job to count the votes fairly and without bias.

If left alone—if left alone—the Big Lie threatens the very future of our Republic. If people don't believe in the sanctity of our elections, what is going to happen to this Republic? The sanctity of elections, the fairness of elections, the fact that after election day we abide by the results has been the cornerstone of our entire democracy. It is what democracy is all about. It is what the Founding Fathers constructed. Are we going to let that go by the wayside? Are we going to let it be poisoned and vitiated, with huge consequences to the effect of this Nation, probably greater than any we have seen since the Civil War?

So, as we remember January 6 this week and as we confront State-level voter suppression, we must be clear that they are not isolated developments; they are all directly linked to the same anti-democratic poison of the Big Lie.

Let me say that one more time. The insurrection of January 6, the flurry of new voter restriction laws, and the State-level efforts to subvert democracy are not isolated developments but manifestations of the same anti-democratic poison of Donald Trump's Big Lie, and they all demand the same solution: The Senate must advance legislation to protect our democracy and safeguard the right to vote.

Over the coming weeks, the Senate will thus consider legislation we can pass to achieve this goal. Democrats for months have tried to bring Republicans to the table, but every single time, Republicans use the rules of the Senate to prevent even a debate.

Voting rights in the past was a bipartisan issue. How quickly they forget. Republican Presidents—Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush—supported voting rights.

When voting rights extensions came up in this body in the past, they passed by large majorities—bipartisan. The resistance we see from modern-day Republicans is a beast of an entirely different nature. Maybe some of them were scared of Trump. But too many of them see this as a way to win advantage, to get their hard-right views enacted, even though the public doesn't support them, by jaundicing our election process and putting barriers in the way of particular people—not all people—of voting: people of color, poor people, people who live in big cities, young people, handicapped people, elderly people.

As I said in my "Dear Colleague" earlier this week, if Republicans continue to hijack the rules of the Chamber to prevent action on something as critical as protecting our democracy, then the Senate will debate and consider changes to the rules on or before January 17, Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Over the course of history, the Senate has debated voting rights many times and done what was necessary to take action, but rarely did our predecessors face the sort of malice that now confronts our democracy from within.

One final point. I mean, the arguments from the other side—they are saying: Federalize the elections. That is in the Constitution, that Federal elections can be determined by Federal legislation. That is what some of our great post-Civil War amendments were all about. That is what the history of voting rights legislation has been about. When State legislatures, for reasons often bigoted and racist, said people couldn't vote for one reason or another or stopped them from voting, the Congress stepped in. That is nothing new. It is unbelievable the arguments they come up with—just totally false. Totally false.

So as we hold this debate, I ask my colleagues to consider this question: If the right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy, then how can we Democrats permit a situation in which Republicans can pass voter suppression laws at the State level with only a simple majority vote but not allow the U.S. Senate to do the same? And I ask that of my Democratic colleagues—my Democratic colleagues.

This asymmetry cannot hold. If Senate Republicans continue to abuse the filibuster to prevent this body from acting, then the Senate must adapt. The Senate always has.

Robert C. Byrd, one of this Chamber's great traditionalists, acknowledged that Senate rules that seemed appropriate in the past "must be changed to reflect changed circumstances." Boy oh boy, do we have changed circumstances now with this abandonment of voting rights by the Republican Party and a willingness to let voters from one end of the country to the other be suppressed. As times change and circumstances evolve, the Senate must follow the suit of changed circumstances when necessary. So we are going to work towards that goal in the coming weeks.

To downplay the threat against our democracy is dangerous—dangerous. We have seen this in history forever. When people try to subvert democracy, when they use threats of violence to do so, if good people don't stand up, the democracy can wither. We cannot let that happen to our wonderful country.

There is no better way to heal the damage of January 6 than to act so that our constitutional order is preserved for the future. If we do not act to protect our elections, the horrors of January 6 will risk becoming not the exception but the norm. The stakes could not be higher. So we are going to move forward.

I yield the floor.

THE ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

REMEMBERING HARRY REID

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Mark Twain said that "the two most impor-

tant days in your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why."

Harry Reid grew up in the tiny mining town of Searchlight, NV. This politician class, which I am part of, likes to try to trace their roots to some humble beginning, some log cabin experience that they have overcome to reach public office. Harry didn't have to fake it. He was the third of four boys born in the Great Depression to a very poor family. His father was a hard-rock miner who battled alcoholism and was tortured by depression. His father took his own life. Harry came to the floor so many times, I can remember, and spoke of this issue of suicide and what it had meant to him as a boy growing up and what it meant to so many people across America.

His mother, a sweet, humble woman, helped to feed the family by doing laundry. The family home was a sight to behold—a tin-roofed, wooden cabin with no indoor plumbing, no hot water, and no telephone.

The day Harry came into this world was December 2, 1939. The day he had his Mark Twain moment and learned why he was put here happened 30 years later.

Against all odds, Harry had escaped the poverty of his childhood. He had put himself through law school at George Washington University here in Washington, DC, and he worked as a Capitol Police officer in this building to pay for his law school. After graduating, he returned to Nevada as a young lawyer and got involved in local politics.

Then came that Mark Twain moment. Harry attended a speech at the University of Nevada in Reno by a writer named Alex Haley. Haley's masterwork, "Roots," traced the story of one American family's triumphant rise over several generations from the horrors of slavery to freedom. Something that Alex Haley said that night hit Harry Reid like a thunderbolt. Haley said: "Be proud of who you are. You can't escape who you are."

Harry Reid recalled that moment in his farewell address to the Senate a little over 4 years ago. Harry said: "I walked out of that event that night a different person, a new man. From that day forward, I would always be Harry Reid from Searchlight."

As his favorite author, Mark Twain, might say, that was the day Harry Reid found out why he was born. He spent the rest of his life after that Alex Haley experience—almost half a century—climbing the political ladder in America to one of its highest rungs but using that power to help underdogs like the little boy from Searchlight, people like his parents, who struggled to feed their children, and others who felt the crushing hand of fate.

Harry Reid believed that the American family could come together as a government and make life better for one another. He believed that wise government decisions gave people an op-

portunity to overcome adversity. Some who grew up in poverty and hardship and escaped it are so seared by the pain of that life that they never want to look back. They develop a sort of myopia that seems to make it hard for them to even see the struggles of others. That was not Harry Reid.

As a young man, he was a tough middleweight boxer. As a lawmaker, he used his boxer's instincts to fight for others. He mastered the arts of dealmaking and lawmaking to help people who work hard and struggle.

He will go down in history as a Senate majority leader who helped deliver the Affordable Care Act—ObamaCare—the most important health and economic security advancement in America in 50 years. Thirty-one million Americans—1 out of every 10—have health insurance today because of Obama's leadership and Harry Reid making it a reality.

His work in the Senate, I witnessed personally, day by day by day. I can remember so many chapters, days when I thought it was over; there was no way. Here we were with exactly 60 votes, and our friend, a man we both loved, Teddy Kennedy was dying. We didn't know if we could get to the finish line in time while he was still alive, but Harry was determined. He had a bulldog tenacity to pass that bill. When he fought for the Affordable Care Act, Harry remembered his own life story of how his brother had been writhing in agony in bed with a broken leg because the family couldn't afford to take him to a doctor. Harry used his power to prevent other families from knowing that suffering.

After the great recession of 2009 robbed millions of Americans of their jobs, their homes, and their savings, Harry Reid, as majority leader, helped pass the landmark Dodd-Frank Wall Street reforms, to help prevent the abuses that led to that crash.

Nevada is home to many immigrants. Senator Harry Reid was a passionate advocate of legislation to fix our broken immigration system. We came to the House together, elected in 1982. He left just a few years later to come to the Senate, and I joined him a few years after that, so we had a friendship that dated back many years.

He knew my feelings about immigration, particularly about the DREAM Act. He wasn't sure of exactly what to do until he had two moments in life; one, when his wife Landra talked to him about that issue and how he had to do the right thing and the second was when he came to meet the immigrant people who were in his State of Nevada and hear their life stories. He promised me as my friend and as his whip to his majority leadership that he would bring the DREAM Act to the floor. He knew he had to block out the calendar to do it, and he knew the chances of success were limited, but he was determined to give me my day here on the floor of the Senate.

He brought the DREAM Act to the floor of the Senate in December of 2010.